

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (currently amended) A ~~neckable~~ necked nonwoven web, comprising:

a central region and two edge regions;

the central region including a plurality of first fibers;

the two edge regions including a plurality of second fibers different from the first fibers;

the fibers in the central and edge regions being selected so as to provide selectively easier necking in the central region.

2. (currently amended) The ~~neckable~~ necked nonwoven web of Claim 1, wherein the first fibers have a first areal percentage of interfiber bonding, and the second fibers have a second areal percentage of interfiber bonding, the second percentage being lower than the first percentage.

3. (currently amended) The ~~neckable~~ necked nonwoven web of Claim 2, wherein the first areal percentage of interfiber bonding is at least 3% less than the second areal percentage of interfiber bonding.

4. (currently amended) The ~~neckable~~ necked nonwoven web of Claim 2, wherein the first areal percentage of interfiber bonding is at least 5% less than the second areal percentage of interfiber bonding.

5. (currently amended) The ~~neckable~~ necked nonwoven web of Claim 2, wherein the first areal percentage of interfiber bonding is at least 7% less than the second areal percentage of interfiber bonding.

6. (currently amended) The ~~neckable~~ necked nonwoven web of Claim 1, wherein the central region comprises elongated interfiber bonds oriented more in a machine direction, and the two edge regions comprise interfiber bonds oriented more in a cross direction.

7. (currently amended) The ~~neckable~~ necked nonwoven web of Claim 1, wherein the central region comprises interfiber point bonds that are relatively large and widely spaced, and the two edge regions comprise interfiber point bonds that are relatively small and closely spaced.

8. (currently amended) The ~~neckable~~ necked nonwoven web of Claim 1, wherein the fibers in the central region have a first average denier, and the fibers in the edge regions have a second average denier, the first average denier being smaller than the second average denier.

9. (currently amended) The ~~neckable~~ necked nonwoven web of Claim 8, wherein the first average denier is at least 5% smaller than the second average denier.

10. (currently amended) The ~~neckable~~ necked nonwoven web of Claim 8, wherein the first average denier is at least 10% smaller than the second average denier.

11. (currently amended) The ~~neckable~~ necked nonwoven web of Claim 8, wherein the first average denier is at least 20% smaller than the second average denier.

12. (currently amended) The ~~neckable~~ necked nonwoven web of Claim 1, wherein the fibers in the central region are relatively more randomly or cross-directionally oriented, and the fibers in the two edge regions are relatively more machine-direction oriented.

13. (currently amended) The ~~neckable~~ necked nonwoven web of Claim 1, wherein the fibers in the two edge regions are more aligned than the fibers in the central region.

14. (currently amended) The ~~neckable~~ necked nonwoven web of Claim 1, wherein the fibers in the central region have a first average aspect ratio, the fibers in the two edge regions have a second average aspect ratio, and the first average aspect ratio is less than the second average aspect ratio.

15. (currently amended) The ~~neckable~~ necked nonwoven web of Claim 14, wherein the first average aspect ratio is at least about 0.5 less than the second average aspect ratio.

16. (currently amended) The ~~neckable~~ necked nonwoven web of Claim 14, wherein the first average aspect ratio is at least about 0.75 less than the second average aspect ratio.

17. (currently amended) The ~~neckable~~ necked nonwoven web of Claim 14, wherein the first average aspect ratio is at least about 1.0 less than the second average aspect ratio.

18. (currently amended) The ~~neckable~~ necked nonwoven web of Claim 1, wherein the fibers in the central region have a first average bulk density, the fibers in the two edge regions have a second average bulk density, and the first average bulk density is less than the second average bulk density.

19. (currently amended) The ~~neckable~~ necked nonwoven web of Claim 18, wherein the first average bulk density is at least about 5% less than the second average bulk density.

20. (currently amended) The ~~neckable~~ necked nonwoven web of Claim 18, wherein the first average bulk density is at least about 10% less than the second average bulk density.

21. (currently amended) The ~~neckable~~ necked nonwoven web of Claim 18, wherein the first average bulk density is at least about 20% less than the second average bulk density.

22. (currently amended) The ~~neckable~~ necked nonwoven web of Claim 1, wherein the first fibers are not crimped, the second fibers are crimped, and the second fibers are present in the edge regions at a percentage at least 10% higher than in the central region.

23. (currently amended) The ~~neckable~~ necked nonwoven web of Claim 22, wherein the second fibers are present in the edge regions of at a percentage at least 20% higher than in the central region.

24. (currently amended) The ~~neckable~~ necked nonwoven web of Claim 1, wherein the first fibers have a first polymer composition, the second fibers have a second polymer composition different from the first polymer composition, and the fibers in the central region have, on average, less stiffness than the fibers in the two edge regions.

25. (currently amended) The ~~neckable~~ necked nonwoven web of Claim 24, wherein the first fibers are present in the central region at a percentage at least about 20% higher than in the two edge regions.

26. (currently amended) The ~~neckable~~ necked nonwoven web of Claim 24, wherein the first fibers are present in the central region at a percentage at least 30% higher than in the two edge regions.

27. (currently amended) The ~~neckable~~ necked nonwoven web of Claim 24, wherein the first fibers are present in the central region at a percentage at least 50% higher than in the two edge regions.

28. (currently amended) The ~~neckable~~ necked nonwoven web of Claim 24, wherein the first fibers comprise an ethylene-propylene copolymer and the second fibers comprise polypropylene.

29. (currently amended) The ~~neckable~~ necked nonwoven web of Claim 24, wherein the first fibers comprise polyethylene and the second fibers comprise polypropylene.

30. (currently amended) The ~~neckable~~ necked nonwoven web of Claim 24, wherein the first fibers comprise polypropylene/polyethylene bicomponent fibers and the second fibers comprise polypropylene.

31. (original) A necked nonwoven web having a length which is at least about 1.2 times an initial pre-necked length, comprising:

a central region and two edge regions;

the central region including a plurality of first fibers and having a first average basis weight;

the two edge regions including a plurality of second fibers different from the first fibers and having a second average basis weight;

the first basis weight being within about $\pm 7\%$ of the second basis weight.

32. (original) The necked nonwoven web of Claim 31, wherein the first basis weight is within about $\pm 5\%$ of the second basis weight.

33. (original) The necked nonwoven web of Claim 31, wherein the first basis weight is within about $\pm 3\%$ of the second basis weight.

34. (original) A necked nonwoven web having a necked width of at least about nine inches, a length which is at least about 1.2 times an initial, pre-necked length, and a cross-directional nonuniformity index of not more than 20%.

35. (original) The necked nonwoven web of Claim 34, wherein the cross-directional nonuniformity index is not more than 10%.

36. (original) The necked nonwoven web of Claim 34, wherein the cross-directional nonuniformity index is not more than 5%.

37. (original) The necked nonwoven web of Claim 34, comprising a necked spunbond web.

38. (original) The necked nonwoven web of Claim 34, comprising a necked meltblown web.

39. (original) The necked nonwoven web of Claim 34, comprising a necked spunbond-meltblown-spunbond web laminate.

40. (original) The necked nonwoven web of Claim 34, wherein the first fibers have a first areal percentage of interfiber bonding, and the second fibers have a second areal percentage of interfiber bonding, the second percentage being less than the first percentage.

41. (original) The necked nonwoven web of Claim 34, wherein the first fibers have a relatively less restrictive interfiber bond pattern, and the second fibers have a relatively more restrictive interfiber bond pattern.

42. (original) The necked nonwoven web of Claim 34, wherein the fibers in the central region have a first average denier, and the fibers in the edge regions have a second average denier, the first average denier being less than the second average denier.

43. (original) The necked nonwoven web of Claim 34, wherein the fibers in the central region are relatively more randomly or cross-directionally oriented, and the fibers in the two edge regions are relatively more machine-direction oriented.

44. (original) The necked nonwoven web of Claim 34, wherein the fibers in the central region have a first average aspect ratio, the fibers in the two edge regions have a second average aspect ratio, and the first average aspect ratio is less than the second average aspect ratio.

45. (original) The necked nonwoven web of Claim 34, wherein the fibers in the central region have a first average bulk density, the fibers in the two edge regions have a second average bulk density, and the first average bulk density is less than the second average bulk density.

46. (original) The necked nonwoven web of Claim 34, wherein the first fibers are not crimped, and the second fibers are crimped.

47. (original) The necked nonwoven web of Claim 34, wherein the first fibers have a first polymer composition and the second fibers have a second polymer composition different from the first polymer composition.

48. (original) The necked nonwoven web of Claim 34, wherein the fibers in the two edge regions are more aligned than the fibers in the central region.

49. (original) A laminate, comprising:
a necked nonwoven web including a central region and two edge regions;
the central region of the web including a plurality of first fibers;
the two edge regions of the web including a plurality of second fibers different from the first fibers; and
an elastomeric or extendible film bonded to the necked nonwoven web;
wherein the neck-bonded laminate includes a central region having a first basis weight, and two edge regions having a second basis weight within $\pm 7\%$ of the first basis weight.

50. (original) The neck-bonded laminate of Claim 49, comprising two of the necked nonwoven webs, the film being bonded to both necked nonwoven webs.